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DITSON & CO.'S STANDARD OPERA LIBRETTO.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

COMIC OPERA IN THREE ACTS.

BY OTTO NICOLAI.

ADAPTED FROM SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY BY

H. S. MOSENTHAL.

Translated and Adapted for Performance in English By

H. E. KREHBIEL.

BOSTON

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NOTE.—Most of these have Italian or German, as well as English words.

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BOOK OF WORDS

THE

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

COMIC OPERA IN THREE ACTS

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BY

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THE MUSIC BY OTTO NICOLAI

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ARGUMENT.

The plot of Nicolai's opera follows closely that of Shakespeare's comedy, though the action is confined entirely to the adventures of *Falstaff* with the merry wives, with the love of *Fenton* and *Anne* as an incident. *Falstaff* has lost his roystering followers, *Bardolph*, *Pistol*, and *Nym*, and we are also deprived of the unctuous Welsh parson, *Sir Hugh Evans*, while, in return, the milksop character of *Slender* has been happily accentuated in the music. The action begins with the receipt by *Mrs. Ford* and *Mrs. Page* of *Sir John's* love-letters, and proceeds thereafter in close imitation of the original comedy, with the omission of the scenes which have no direct connection with the fat Knight's amatory adventures. *Sir John* is inveigled into two visits to the house of *Mrs. Ford*, with the familiar results. First he is carried out in a basket, covered with foul linen, and "thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horse-shoe." The second time he encounters *Ford's* cudgel. A third meeting is then arranged for Windsor Park, where *Sir John*, after suffering much in his amiable dignity by reason of his absurd attitude (for which, to keep in countenance, he must needs find a parallel in classic mythology), is held up to ridicule after being tormented by the mock fairies, and then forgiven for the sake of the lesson learned by all, and the severity of the punishment suffered at the hands of the keen, witty, and light-hearted women.

The opera had its first production in Berlin, in May, 1849. In May, 1864, it was brought out in Italian (the title changed to "Falstaff") at Her Majesty's in London, and two years later Parisians made its acquaintance at the Theatre Lyrique as "Les Joyeuses Commères de Windsor." In the version prepared for the American Opera the translator has taken a few liberties with the text in order to make as much use as possible of Shakesperean phraseology, and has also filled out the dialogue in a degree with drafts from the comedy.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

Sir John Falstaff.
Mr. Ford. } Two gentlemen dwelling at
Mr. Page. } Windsor.
Fenton.
Slender.
Dr. Caius, a French Physician.
Mistress Ford.
Mistress Page.
Anne Page, her daughter, in love with Fenton.
Host of the Garter Inn.
A Waiter.
First, Second, Third, Fourth } Citizens.
Chorus and Ballet.
Citizens and Wives of Windsor.
Masks of Fairies, elves and other sprites, gnats, flies, etc.
Two servants of Mr. Ford.
Waiter.

Scene — *Windsor and the parts adjacent.*

ML50
N5L8
1890
Music
Library

THE

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.— *Yard. On the right side, the house of Mr. Page — on the left, Mr. Ford's house.* (*Enter Mistress Ford with a letter.*)

Mistress Ford.

Now this is really quite too bad,
How dares he thus to vex me?
The drunken sot is surely mad
With love vows to perplex me!
Ah! If he were a gallant knight,
Young, handsome, proud in bearing —
But of all lovers such as this,
May heav'n be kindly sparing!
Can I the note have read correctly?

[*Reads.*]

"The kindly fates, fair lady,
Us for each other made;
Your eyes gleam like the starlight,
Your blood is far from staid —"
Now is it strange one's wrath should rise,
When such a beast extols one's eyes?

[*Continuing to read.*]

"You love good sack, and so do I;
Here, then, is sympathy —"
What means the coarse and scurvy knave,
I, sack? I never drink!

[*Reads.*]

"Read me aright,
Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any light,
With all his might,
For thee to fight.
JOHN FALSTAFF."

Ha! wait a while, my foolish fellow,
For these bold words I'll make you bellow!
With my fair neighbor, Mistress Page,
I'll hatch a plot will make you rage!

[*Enter Mistress Page, also with an open letter in her hand. She does not at once perceive Mistress Ford.*]

Mrs. Page.

To Mistress Ford I'll quickly run,
O'er this queer note to ponder;
Such folly ne'er before was done,
Where are his wits, I wonder?

[*Observing Mrs. Ford.*]

Upon my word,
Here's Mistress Ford!
Can I, my dear, your thoughts engage —

Mrs. Ford.

And can I yours, fair Mistress Page?

Mrs. Page.

See this amusing billet-doux —

Mrs. Ford.

A note, my dear? Why, I've one too!

Mrs. Page.

A silly fool has writ to me!

Mrs. Ford.

Oh, read it out!

Mrs. Page.

Yes, I agree!

[*Reads.*]

"The kindly fates, fair lady,
Us for each other made —"

Mrs. Ford.

[*Astounded, reading her own letter.*]

"Us for each other made —"

Mrs. Page.

"Your eyes gleam like the starlight,
Your blood is far from staid—"

Mrs. Ford.

"Your blood is far from staid—"
Go on!

Mrs. Page.

"You love good sack, and so do I;
Here, then, is sympathy—"

Mrs. Ford.

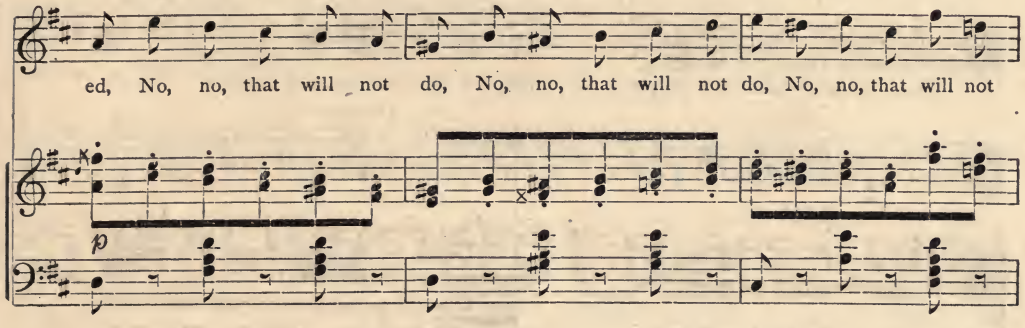
"Here, then, is sympathy—"
Proceed, dear! proceed, dear!

Both.

"Read me aright,
Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any light,
With all his might,
For thee to fight.
JOHN FALSTAFF."

What an outrage! Past redeeming!
Dares he thus true wives pursue?
Fie upon his lustful scheming,
His vile daring he shall rue!
To protect our wifely dower
We must cunningly contrive;
Woman's craft and subtle power,
Must at our revenge connive!

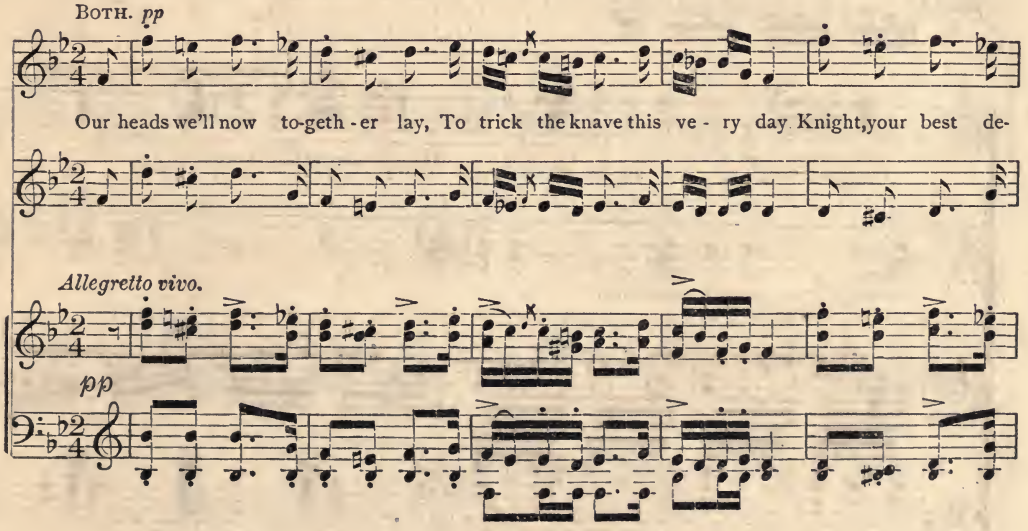
Mrs. FORD.
Mrs. PAGE.
Now tell me your in - ten - tion.
I'll straight to Mis - ter
Allegretto.
fp
Mrs. FORD.
Page.
An im - po - tent in - ven - tion,
You're an - y - thing but
Ped.
sage. Our fun would thus be end - - - ed, Our game at once sus - pend - -

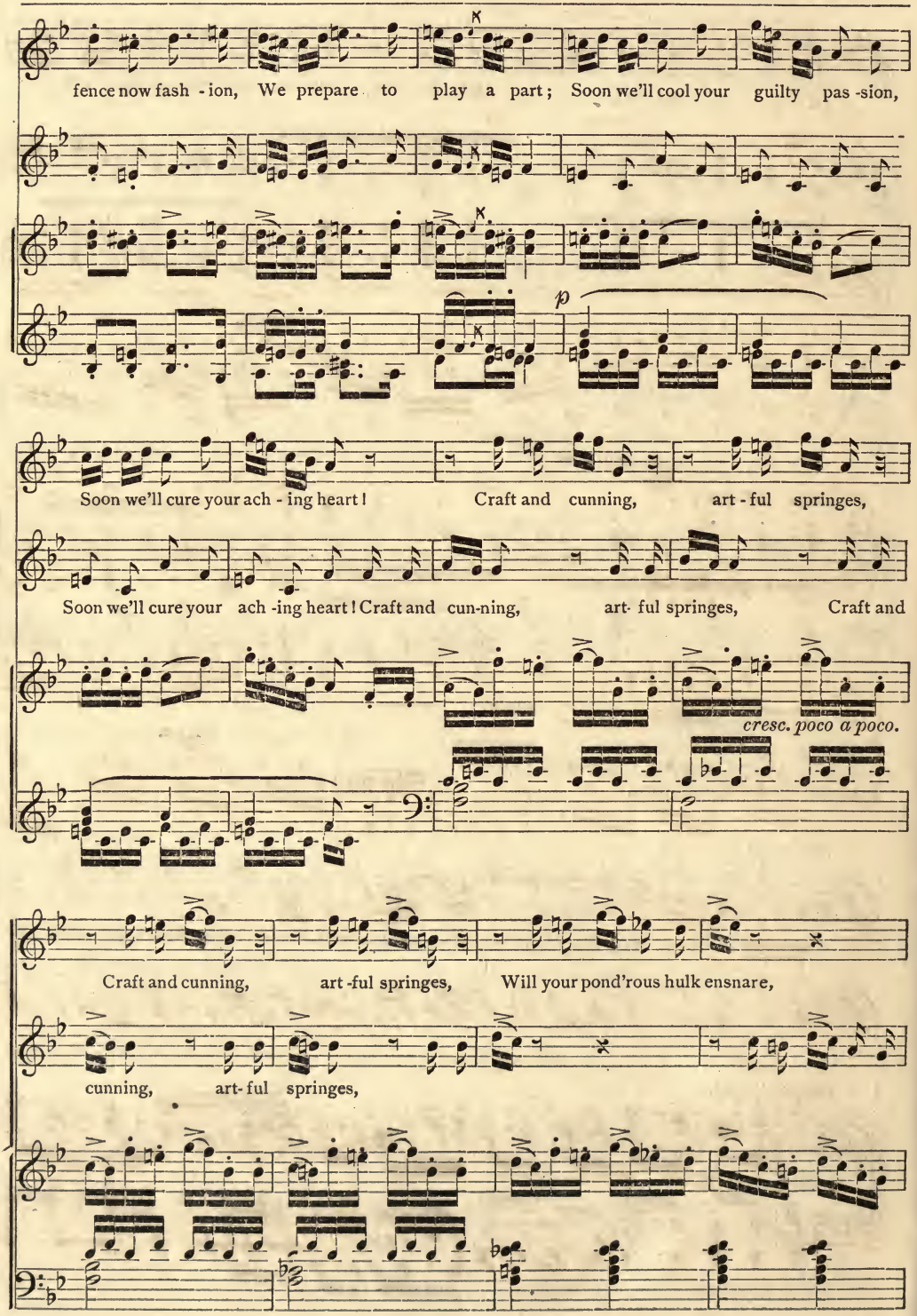


We'll offer comfort in his suit,
And e'en appoint a meeting;
Then, having trapped the greasy brute,
Provide for him a beating!

Mrs Page.

The plan will serve!




fence now fash - ion, We prepare to play a part; Soon we'll cool your guilty pas -sion,
p
Soon we'll cure your ach - ing heart! Craft and cunning, art - ful springes,
Soon we'll cure your ach -ing heart! Craft and cun-ning, art- ful springes, Craft and
cresc. poco a poco.
Craft and cunning, art -ful springes, Will your pond'rous hulk ensnare,
cunning, art- ful springes,

mf
Ah! . . . . And in - flict a thou - sand twin - ges! There -fore,
mf
man. Ah!
Ped. Ped. Ped.
scur - vy knave, beware, And in - flict a thou - sand twin- ges, Therefore, scur -vy
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.
f
knave, be - ware, ... Therefore, scur- vy knave, be - ware.
in - flict a thousand twin - ges, Therefore, scur - vy knave, be - ware.
8
cres.

[*They hurry into the house of Mrs. Ford.*]

SCENE II. — *Mr. Ford, Mr. Page, Slender and Caius. Enter in conversation.*

Ford.

Gentlemen, I desire your company within. We have a hot venison pasty to dinner and I hope you will discuss it with me.

Page.

Excuse me, neighbor Ford. My wife awaits me.

Slender.

Thank you also, forsooth heartily, but I have accepted an invitation from Master Page, and I would not for a sum lose the chance to dine with sweet Anne.

Caius.

[*Aside.*]

Ce Jack'nape!

Page.

You have my good will, Master Slender, in your suit for my fair daughter, though Mistress Page looks favoringly upon the doctor here.

Caius.

Oui, pardieu! And the lady loves me too. I have read it in her lovely eyes!

Slender.

[*Aside.*]

O, sweet Anne!

Ford.

[*To Caius.*]

'Tis deceptive literature, good doctor! The women love to scatter it broadcast. That I know from my own wife, whom I cannot watch closely enough.

[*Growing vehement.*]

But if ever I catch a lover with her, I'll —

Page.

Keep your peace, neighbor Ford. Your eternal jealousy but wrongs a virtuous woman and makes of you a butt.

Ford.

And you will trust your wife — you will not be jealous, till your pate supports a branching ornament! Trust a Fleming with your butter, a Welchman with your cheese, an Irishman with your aqua-vitæ bottle, or a thief with your ambling gelding, but not a wife with herself. O these women, these women!

Page.

And yet we will not quarrel. I know you are incorrigible. Let us in.

Ford.

Good day, gentlemen. I would not leave my wife too long alone!

SCENE III. — *Page, Slender, and Dr. Caius. Afterward Fenton.*

Page.

[*To Slender.*]

Enter the house, meanwhile my worthy son-in-law.
There soon again I'll join you.

Slender.

[*Entering Page's house.*]

O sweetest Anne!

Caius.

[*Furiously.*]

Son-in-law! *Mort de ma vie!* We're not so far advance! Myself sall kill-a him, *ce Monsieur* Slender, and take possession of *la belle Anna!* Be gar! I will by all ze *diables!*

[*Exit.*]

Page.

Ugh! That ugly *parlez-vous!*
Ah! what does Master Fenton here?
Your pleasure!

Fenton.

Your sweet daughter.

Page.

What, my daughter!

Fenton.

Her to whom my heart belongs.

Page.

[*Aside.*]

Was the like e'er seen before?
Such a paltry, piddling beggar
Dares my daughter's hand implore!

Fenton.

Wealth, indeed, I cannot offer —

Page.

That full well I understand.

Fenton.

Love requited still I proffer,
And a stout and willing hand!

Page.

Very good; but one great flaw —

Fenton.

O trust my love; it's true and tender!

Page.

[*Aside.*]

Mars your claim.
Now Master Slender
Is a worthier son-in-law.

Fenton.

Recall the days of youth and pleasure,
When o'er your bosom love held sway;
Refuse me not my life's fond treasure,
Nor send me coldly thus away!
Deny me not this greatest blessing,
Avoid what you would later rue,
Though neither wealth nor lands possessing,
I'm rich in love that's fond and true.

Page.

[*Aside.*]

Who to me no wealth can render
Stands no chance 'gainst Master Slender.
Better suitor, to my mind,
My fair daughter can not find.
His vast wealth I view with zest,
Safely placed at interest,
Yielding, (to believe I've grounds,)
Annually six hundred pounds,
With an ever-growing trade!
Anne's fortune's surely made!

Fenton.

Do you consent? Have I your voice?

Page.

No, no; I've made a better choice!

Fenton.

Ah, none so truly will defend her!

Page.

Indeed! How's our young Master Slender?

Fenton.

What! He! And for this parrakeet
Am I denied?

Page.

You're not discreet!
Do not insult my son-in-law;
Anne's not for you; so, sir, withdraw!

Fenton.

And this is all you have to say?

Page.

Excuse me, sir, I must away!

Fenton.

Good neighbor Page, be on your guard;
I love your daughter, will labor hard
To put to naught your cruel scheming;
True love ne'er yet was idle seeming!
Though greed and tyranny combine
I swear your daughter shall be mine!

Page.

Good sir, your threat'ning tongue retard!
Anne Page your love can ne'er regard.
Vain are the plots with which you're teeming,
Vain all the hopes that fill your dreaming.
Forget your love, cease to repine,
To you her hand I'll ne'er consign!

[*Exit both, Page into his house.*]

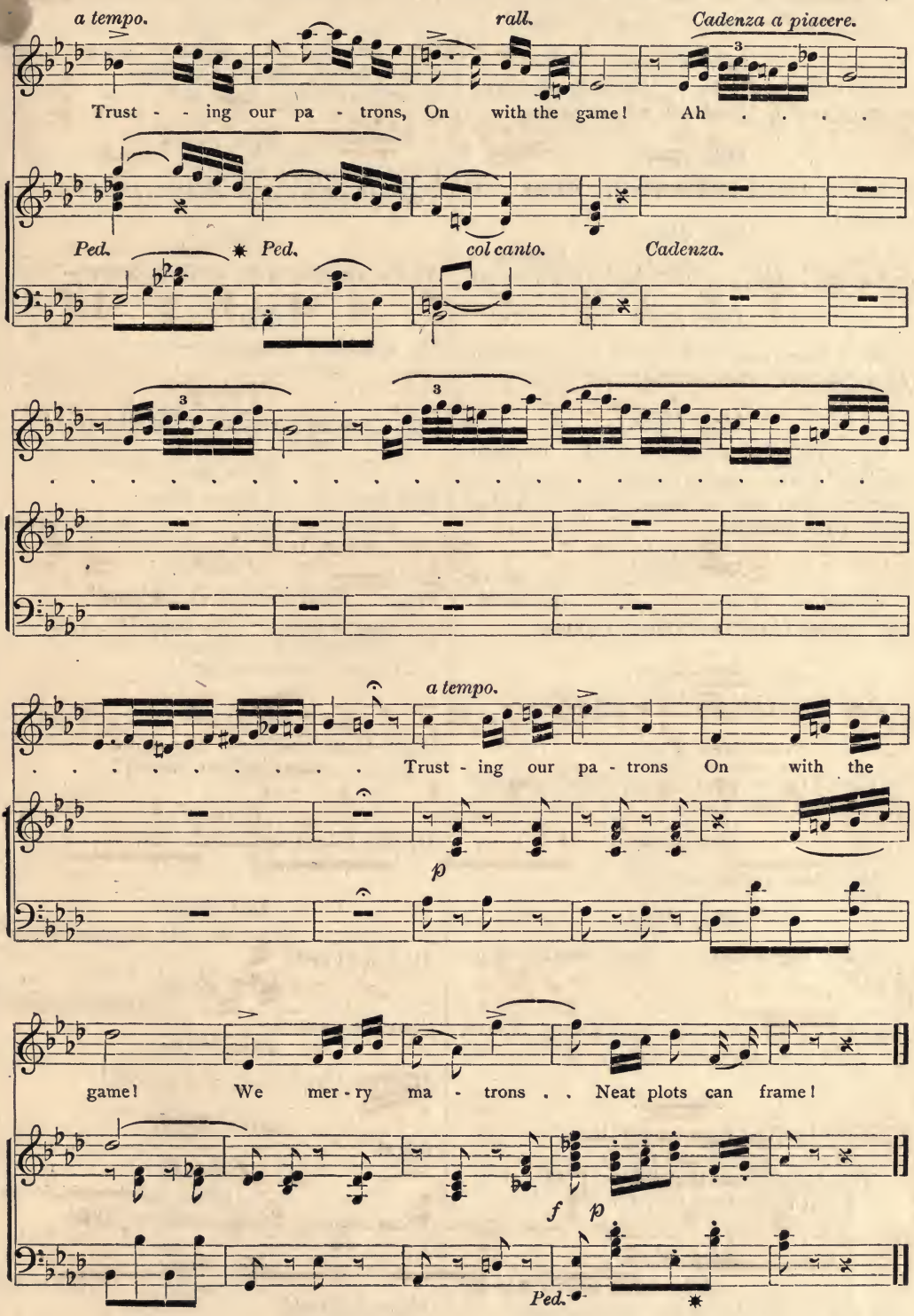
SCENE IV. — *A room in Ford's House. Mrs. Ford.*
[*Entering from the side door at the left.*]

Mrs. Ford.

Now to my aid, fun, wit and humor,
The maddest mischief, trick and artifice!
Naught's too severe that serves my purpose
To give our self-elected lords a drubbing.
Ah, what a tribe! So profligate,
Too great a punishment does not exist!
And first of all, yon watery pumpion
Who fain my love would seek, shall rue his conduct!
But when he comes, how might I best extend him greeting?
How best address him? Ah, I have it now!
Deceiver! Why do you thus
A woman's wifely honor assail?
The outrage I should ne'er condone,
My rage should punishment demand. —
But ah! A woman's heart is soft! —
Your suit, so eloquently urged,
Your sighs — make me relent —
No longer can I cruel be!
And I confess it, blushing, Sir John,
My gallant knight, I love you!
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! He will believe me!
My part, indeed, I play quite well
Though venturesome beyond a doubt
The little joke escapes harsh condemnation.

Mrs Ford.

Poco meno mosso.
Fro - lic and laugh - ter Give zest to liv - ing, All find for - giv - ing
p
p poco rall.
.a tempo.
Eas - y to do. Thus for . . mere pleas - ure, Ly - ing . . sans
col canto.
mf
p
mf p
Ped.
poco rall.
meas - ure Is sure - ly ve - ni - al, Love be - ing true.
p
col canto.
Ped.


a tempo.
rall.
Cadenza a piacere.
Trust - - ing our pa - trons, On with the game! Ah . . . . .
Ped.
Ped.
col canto.
Cadenza.
a tempo.
Trust - ing our pa - trons On with the
p
game! We mer - ry ma - trons . . Neat plots can frame!
f
p
Ped.

SCENE V.— *Mistress Ford, Mistress Page.*

Mrs. Page.

[*Entering cautiously.*]

Well, Gossip Ford — is all prepared?

Mrs. Ford.

Everything is in readiness. Behold the basket!

Mrs. Page.

[*Laughing.*]

Capital! Ha, ha, ha! And the servants?

Mrs. Ford.

Will answer my call. And have you discharged your commissions?

Mrs. Page.

In all things as we had agreed. To your husband I have sent a letter wherefrom he learned, that this evening he may find a lover with his wife.

Mrs. Ford.

Glorious! Then both will be punished; my husband for his senseless jealousy —

Mrs. Page.

And the fat knight for his impudence.

Mrs. Ford.

Then to your post! I hear him coming! Remember your cue.

Mrs. Page.

Now play your part well!

Mrs. Ford.

We'll teach him to know turtles from jays!

SCENE VI.— *Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page, Falstaff, Slender, Ford, Caius, Page, and Chorus.*

Falstaff.

Have I at last then caught thee,
My heavenly jewel rare?
This eager heart that sought thee
Shall make thee lady fair!

[*Tries to embrace her.*]

Mrs. Ford.

[*Rising, and affecting modesty.*]

Ah, sweet Sir John, my blushes spare!

Falstaff.

How now, my love, abandon care;
Come, sweet, discard all sorrow!
Your fears I'll all disprove!

Mrs. Ford.

I fear that on the morrow
You will forget your love!

Falstaff.

As I am chaste and free from error —

Mrs. Ford.

Not quickly I'll engage —

Falstaff.

Come, sweetheart, cast aside all terror!

Mrs. Ford.

You love, too, Mistress Page!

[*Mistress Page appears listening at the door, left.*]

Falstaff.

What! That ill-favored beldame!
Whence got you that conceit?
She limps like any cripple!
I'm not a fool complete!

Mrs. Ford.

Well, heaven knows I love you,
My brave and gallant knight!

Falstaff.

By yon bright sun above you,
You are my soul's delight!

Mrs. Page.

[*Knocking at the door from without.*]

Mistress Ford!

Mrs. Ford.

[*Feigning alarm.*]

Some one knocks!

Mrs. Page.

Mistress Ford, be quick, unlock!

Mrs. Ford.

Alas!

Falstaff.

[*In an undertone, frightened.*]

What's this? Speak, Mistress Ford!

Mrs. Page.

[*Knocking.*]

Mistress Ford!

Falstaff.
Heav'n help me!

Mrs. Ford.
[*Aloud.*]
Yes, at once!
[*To Falstaff.*]
Conceal yourself, my sweet one!

[*Falstaff goes behind the arras. Mrs. Page knocks again, Mrs. Ford opens the door.*]

Mrs. Page.
Alas! I am exhausted quite;
Forever you are shamed, undone!

Mrs. Ford.
How so, how so, fair Gossip Page?

Mrs. Page.
Your husband's in a furious rage!
O save yourself! His wrath assuage!

Mrs. Ford.
Speak louder!— [*Aside.*]
Ah! How unfortunate! — [*Aloud.*]

Mrs. Page.
He storms, and swears he's certain quite
A mans' concealed within the house!

Mrs. Ford.
What shall I do? I sink with fright!

Mrs. Page.
Unhappy one! then it is true?

Mrs. Ford.
Alas, it is!
Speak louder, do! — [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Page.
You both are lost! My blood congeals!
Half Windsor follows at his heels;
And if he finds your lover here,
He'll kill him sure!

Mrs. Ford.
I'll die with fear!

Mrs. Page.
A basket, see! Though 'tis not deep,
Within it let your lover creep;
If not, his life's not worth a fig!

Mrs. Ford.
In there? Alas, he's much too big!

Falstaff.
Let's see the thing, I'll in! Be quick!

Mrs. Page.
What's this? Sir John?

Falstaff.
Yes, pretty chick!

Mrs. Page.
'Tis you that wrote my *billet-doux?*

Falstaff.
Yes, yes, 'tis I! I love you too!
And gladly I will be your knight
If I escape this sorry plight!

Mrs. Ford.
Be quick! Be quick!

Falstaff.
Sweet Mistress Ford!

Mrs. Page.
Be quick! Be quick!

Falstaff.
Sweet Mistress Page!

Both Women.
Get in! Get in!

Falstaff.
I love you both!

Both Women.
Now, greasy pudding, *bon voyage!*

Mrs. Ford.
Ho, servants! Now, give careful heed,
This basket take to Datchet mead. [*Aside.*]
Unload it in the muddy ditch!

[*Enter Ford, Page, Caius, Slender, and Citizens.*]

Ford.
Come in! Come in! Come all and see!
Each one of you shall witness be.
[*To the servants.*]
Ho, rascals, stop! What have you there?

Mrs. Ford.
Away the washing quickly bear!
What ails you, meddling, jealous fool?
Would you the household laundry rule?

Ford.
Ha! false one, you are caught at last;
The time for simulation's past!

Mrs. Ford.

Ah, dearest husband!

Ford.

Viper! Go!

Page.

[*To Ford.*]

Come, be content.

Caius.

Horreur!

Page.

Not so.
Here are the keys; now come with me,
Within this house the man must be!

Caius.

Il est jaloux furieusement!

Slender.

O sweetest Anna!

Mrs. Ford.

Husband mine—

The Others.

Good neighbor Ford, now be content!

Chorus.

His heart with jealousy is rent.

Ford.

In intrigues woman's time is spent,
Her lord's dishonor to augment!

[*Exit all but Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page.*]

Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page.

Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This is, indeed, a royal joke!
Go, peep into each crack and cranny!

Mrs. Ford.

Our gallant knight is put to soak!

Mrs. Page.

And neighbor Ford must feel uncanny?

Mrs. Ford.

Yet this alone will not suffice;
We must contrive again to trick him.

Mrs. Page.

Let us again the knight entice,
And with our wit to-morrow prick him.

Both.

'Tis thus a wife can play a game,
And yet preserve an honest name.

[*Enter the men.*]

Mrs. Ford.

[*Aside.*]

They're from the hunt returning,
Though nothing have they caught.

Mrs. Page.

All consolation spurning,
Sit down with grief distraught!

Ford.

Nil?

The Men.

Nil!

Mrs. Page.

[*To Mrs. Ford.*]

Pray tell me, what has grieved you?

Mrs. Ford.

With grief and shame I'll die!

Mrs. Page.

[*To Ford.*]

How dare, who ne'er deceived you,
You shamelessly belie,
Her innocence defame?

All.

Oh shame! Oh shame! Oh shame!

Mrs. Ford.

Alas! those days are faded,
Since first my love he won!
No grief my joy then shaded,
His heart was mine alone.
Now blinded by his fury
There's naught but pain and grief,
His jealous rage will surely
Torment his wife to death!

Maggiore.
FORD.
All search . . . is un - a - vail - - ing, No
Ped. a tempo.
MRS. PAGE.
trace . . of him I find; The dev - - il, still pre - vail - - ing, Dis-
Ped.
Ped.
FORD.
stroys my peace of mind! Now full . . of jealous fu - - ry There's naught but pain and
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

The Others.

All search is unavailing,
No trace of him we find;
His jealousy prevailing
Destroys his peace of mind!
Observe, his idle fury
Brings only pain and grief,
His jealous rage will surely
Torment his wife to death!

Ford.

Forgive. A letter told me, dear,
I'd surely find John Falstaff here!

Mrs. Ford.

Ungrateful man! The die is cast,
No time for reparation,
All Windsor town shall know at last
My sufferinge here, my sorrows vast;
I'll seek a separation!

Ford.

'Twas that confounded letter cast
Us into desolation;
But cease your cries or else, at last
All Windsor town will stand aghast,
At your vituperation!

All Others.

O shame! O shame! such blame to cast,
Such wicked condemnation!
All Windsor town shall know at last,
Her sufferings here, her sorrows vast,
Her righteous separation!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Garter Inn. Falstaff, Waiter.*

Falstaff.

Waiter! Here waiter, I say. Is no one in?

Waiter.

What is your worship's wish?

Falstaff.

How can you ask? Quick, fetch me a quart of sack!

Waiter.

At once, Sir John!

[*Hurries off and returns in a moment with a jug of sack. Then exit.*]

Falstaff.

Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown into the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I'll have my brains ta'en out and buttered and give them to a dog for a New-Year's gift. The rogues slighted me into the river with as little remorse as they would have drowned a bitch's blind puppies, fifteen in the litter. And you may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking — if the bottom were as deep as hell I should down. I had been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and shallow — a death that I abhor; for the water swells a man, and what a thing should I have been, when I had been swelled! I should have been a mountain of mummy!

[*Reaching for the jug.*]

Come, old friend, bring me surcease of the terrible recollection!

[*Drinks.*]

But what now? I must invent, plot, plan. My fortune must be bettered! It might have gone well with yon dainty women. Their husbands are rich, and I would have used them as the keys to the cuckoldy knaves' coffers. But now? —

Waiter.

[*Bringing a letter.*]

A letter, Sir John, but this moment left here by a woman.

Falstaff.

Give it here.

[*Opens the letter; the waiter filled with curiosity stands by until driven away.*]

Ah! from Mistress Ford!

[*Angrily.*]

I'll have no more Ford. I have had ford enough, I was thrown into the ford; I have my belly full of ford! But let us see: —

[*Reads.*]

"I am inconsolable over yesterday's misadventures. But hold your peace and come again to-day! At nine of the clock my husband goes a-birding, and then —"

[*In ecstacy.*]

How now! Sayest thou so, old Jack? Go thy ways! Will they yet look after thee? I'll make more of thy old body than I have done. The women shall yet fill my purse!

SCENE II. — *Falstaff, Citizens, Waiters, Musicians.*

Citizens.

[*Without.*]

What ho! Sack! Robert!

[*Enter Citizens, some carrying cross-bows, bird nets, and other hunting apparatus.*]

First Citizen.

Bestir yourself; bring me a cup of sack!

Waiter.

At once, gentlemen!

Falstaff.

Ho, Robert, a fresh pottle for me!

First Citizen.

[*To the other.*]

Ah, yonder sits fat Sir John Falstaff, for whose sake Ford yesterday made such unnecessary alarum. Let us speak to him.

[*Stepping up to Falstaff.*]

Ah, Sir knight, I'm pleased to see you well!

Falstaff.

The pleasure is mutual! Ecod, but ye are generously accoutred. Whither away so early?

First Citizen.

We go a-birding.

Falstaff.

Indeed! Then *imprimis* clear your eyes with a cup of good sack. Right, brave hearts, 'tis drinking makes the world go round! Success attend you!

[*Lifting his jug.*]

First and Second Citizens.

[*Grasping their cups.*]

Your good health, Sir John!

Falstaff.

Bravo! Well emptied cockchafers!

[*Contemptuously.*]

Why you've nut-shells for drinking cups!

First Citizen.

Indeed! I'll drink as much as he!

Second Citizen.

And I, I'll wager.

Falstaff.

Say you so?

[*Arising.*]

Come, a tilt; who drinks the most is acquit of the account.

The Citizens.

Agreed.

Falstaff.

[*Aside.*]

Rash fools! How they'll regret it!

[*Aloud.*]

Fall to't: Take the jug as I do, and empty it at a draught! Long live good sack!

All.

Live sack!

[*The two Citizens drink from the jugs, the others from cups. Falstaff and the two empty their jugs in a single long draught, and then tap their thumbnails with the rim to show that the vessels are empty. Waiters stand ready with fresh jugs.*]

Falstaff.

Bravo! A right tolerable draught, if 'twill but endure. We shall see. You will try't again?

First Citizen.

[*Aside to the Second.*]

Can you?

Second Citizen.

[*Dubiously.*]

I will try.

First Citizen.

[*To Falstaff.*]

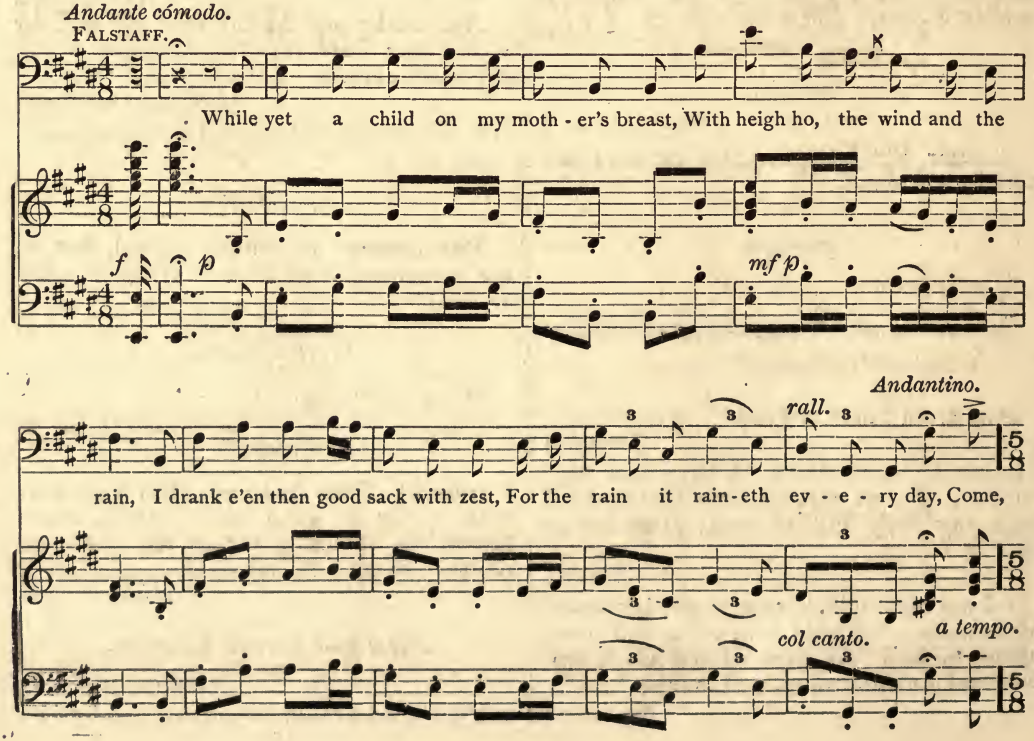
Yes, yes, we'll try't again.

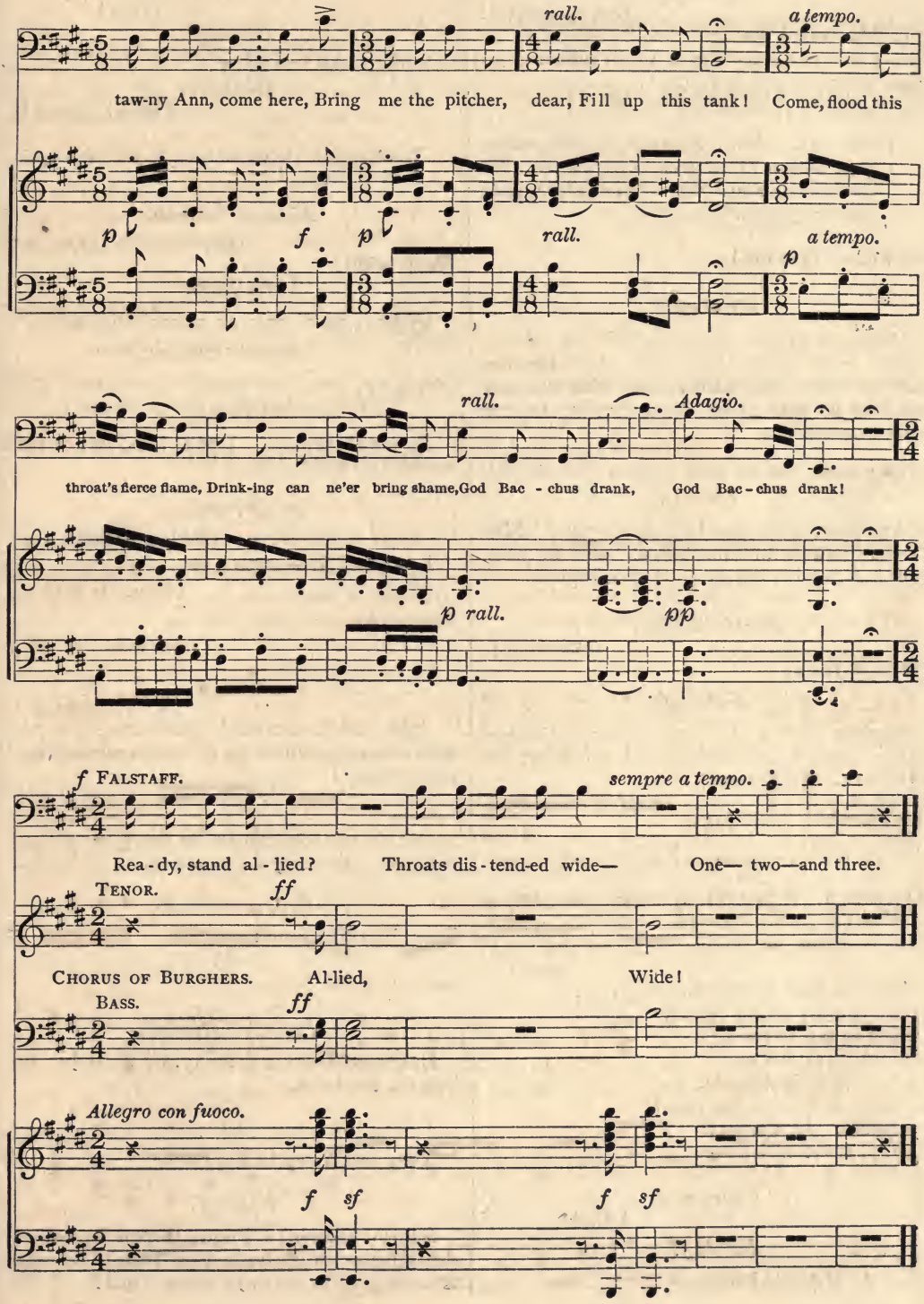
Falstaff.

Then to the second trial!

[*Exchanging the empty jugs for freshly filled ones.*]

But now a merry song to give us the metre for drinking.


Andante cómodo.
FALSTAFF.
While yet a child on my moth - er's breast, With heigh ho, the wind and the
f
p
mf p
Andantino.
rall.
rain, I drank e'en then good sack with zest, For the rain it rain-eth ev - e - ry day, Come,
col canto.
a tempo.


rall.
a tempo.
taw-ny Ann, come here, Bring me the pitcher, dear, Fill up this tank! Come, flood this
p
f
p
rall.
a tempo.
p
rall.
Adagio.
throat's fierce flame, Drink-ing can ne'er bring shame, God Bac - chus drank, God Bac - chus drank!
p rall.
pp
f FALSTAFF.
sempre a tempo.
Rea - dy, stand al - lied? Throats dis - tend-ed wide— One— two—and three.
TENOR.
ff
CHORUS OF BURGHERS.
Al-lied,
Wide!
BASS.
ff
Allegro con fuoco.
f
sf
f
sf

Chorus.

Three! Bravo!
They bore one from the revel's height,
Good wine had overthrown him quite.
God Bacchus granted him sweet rest.
Sleep, toper, none will you molest!

[*After the first verse is sung they all drink, reverse their jugs, and hand them to the waiters. The second citizen cannot finish the draught; he reels, drops the jug, and calls out:*]

No more — for me!

Falstaff.

What's this? Vanquished so soon? Alas, poor varlet, thy stomach lacks the valor of thy will. Come, bear him out, and put him to rest upon the green lap of our common mother.

[*They carry him out while singing. To the first Citizen:*]

And how goes the bout with you? Methinks there is an unsteadiness also in your gait. Art with me again, brave toper?

First Citizen.

[*Hilariously.*]

Have at you!

Falstaff.

Spoken like a Trojan. Come, another jug! I hope you will stand up long, for hark you, within here

[*Slapping his paunch.*]

lies room for many jugs.

[*Both have taken fresh jugs. Falstaff sings.*]

And when I'd cast off all my childish ways,
With heigh-ho the wind and the rain!
The maidens all coyly withdrew from my gaze!
For the rain it raineth every day.
Have you an empty purse,
Or is the tap perverse —
Out with the dice!
Fortune 's a fickle jade,
Be bold and seize the maid,
Quick! In a trice!
Ready, stand allied —

Chorus.

Allied!

Falstaff.

Throats distended wide —

Chorus.

Wide!

Falstaff.

One — two — and —

Chorus.

Three! Bravo!

[*At the end of the second verse the first citizen joins in the singing.*]

Fourth Citizen.

[*Restraining his companion.*]

Keep still!

Falstaff.

Fellow, you sing as unmelodiously as a raven. Try at least to keep in time.

[*After they have drunk Falstaff takes dice out of his pocket, and making a throw cries out:*]

A royal throw. Look lads, who will match it for six pence?

First Citizen.

[*Reeling, but still merry.*]

I — I — I 'll — match —

[*Seizing the dice-box.*]

now — see — there — are —

[*Falls across the table.*]

Falstaff.

[*Laughing.*]

Aye, there you are! Remove from my sight these monuments of intemperance and debauchery!

[*The first citizen is carried out.*]

But do not forget that he owes me fifteen pence — gambling debts are debts of honor.

Fourth Citizen.

Long live Sir John!

All.

Long live Sir John.

Fourth Citizen.

But now we must away, or we'll be too late for the hunt.

All.

Yes, yes, away to the hunt.

Falstaff.

Scurvy knaves! Penny-throated pigmies drinking with Polyphemus Jack! Would it were time to go to Mistress Ford!

SCENE III.— *Falstaff, Waiter.*

Waiter.

Sir John, there's a gentleman would speak with you, and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack.

Falstaff.

His name, fellow!

Waiter.

He says he is one Master Brook, and would be acquainted with you.

Falstaff.

Call him in. Such Brooks are welcome to me that o'erflow such liquor.

SCENE IV. — *Ford disguised as Brook. Falstaff.*

Ford.

God bless you, sir!
A privilege most rare, the valiant,
The world-renowned soldier, John Falstaff, thus to greet!

Falstaff.

Ah, Sir, you flatter! (A delightful fellow!)

Ford.

Your pardon first I beg you'll grant,
And in a morning draught of sack then join me.

Falstaff.

Ah! By your leave we'll to the tipple straight.

Ford.

With all my heart!

Both.

Here's to your good health!

Falstaff.

Superb, Sir! But your name I now must ask,
And what brings you to me!

Ford.

My name is Brook, and I'm a man
Who's spent much of his wealth.

Falstaff.

In this, good Master Brook, you've done as I have done.

Ford.

Yet, brave Sir John, I've still a handsome income
Of which I'd spend a share to advance an undertaking.
Concerning which I'd humbly ask your counsel.

Falstaff.

And can I serve you?

Ford.

Yes, indeed. On you, who've been famous
As a gallant cavalier, who is
Adored by all the fair, I venture to intrude.
Now to the point: Know that I am in love
With a certain Mistress Ford, and I must have the lady,
Though the attempt should cost my life.

Falstaff. [*Aside.*]

Ha! By my valor! My interest grows apace.
On my preserves he's poaching! [*To Ford.*]
I know her well; a sweet and charming lady.

Ford. [*Aside.*]

You imp of hell! [*To Falstaff.*]
But she is closely watched
By a most jealous rascal, her husband.
Know you this Ford?

Falstaff.

In sooth I know him not.
But from all sides I hear that he's a jealous, scurvy knave,
Though rich in this world's goods.

Ford. [*Aside.*]

A plague upon this wretch! [*To Falstaff.*]
My good Sir John,
Now since the lady fair my love declines,
Do you lay siege to her heart in my stead.
You are a gallant with puissant graces
'Gainst whom no woman can steel her heart.

Falstaff.

You praise me past my due!

Ford. [*Aside.*]

Not for your knavery!

[*To Falstaff.*]

I have a bag of money here that troubles me,
It may serve a good turn, so kindly
Relieve me of the whole or a portion of it.

Falstaff. [*Aside.*]

Ye gods! What arrant ass is this!

[*To Ford.*]

Good Brook, you are most hap'ly met,
Fair Mistress Ford for you I'll surely conquer.

Ford.

Ah, indeed! That would be simply glorious!

Falstaff.

But tell me how 'twould profit you,
If I should win your suit?

Ford.

That's very simple — Thus:
She dwells securely ever on her honor;
Now could I once confront her,
With evidence of some sort compromising,
I'd win her ear, and then my wishes urge.

Falstaff.

Is this all that you ask?
I'll help you to it straight.

Ford. [*Aside.*]

I shall go mad with rage!

[*To Falstaff.*]

How so? Your plan unfold.

Falstaff.

Ha, ha, ha, ha! To you I may confess it.
Now list: With her I've had, for quite a period,
A most enjoyable flirtation!

Ford. [*Aside.*]

Cursed hell-hound!

Falstaff.

What say you, sir?

Ford.

I said — I said your story holds me spell-bound;
With joy I am beside myself —
But pray continue.

Falstaff.

It was but yesterday I'd an appointment with her,
But in the instant of our encounter
Her spouse, this Master Ford, the fool,
Comes me in in a furious rage,
And at his heels a motley rabble —
How the devil he had got wind of our design
I know not. Enough he came and fumed,
And raged and tore about like mad.

Ford.

While you were present?

Falstaff.

Most truly. But luckily
A neighbor, Mistress Page, comes in,
And gives intelligence of Ford's approach.
Ingenious women! They're quick in their devices,
And they conveyed me into —

Ford.

What?

Falstaff.

— into a great buck basket!

Ford.

In a buck basket?

Falstaff.

Master Brook, just think of that!
This great hulking mass of fat,
Crowded down, the basket creaking,
Under dirty linen reeking,
And then thrown, while hissing hot,
Into Thames's vilest spot!

Ford.

Really, that was quite too bad,
Your recital makes me sad;
You deserve commiseration
For such suffering and privation,

Met, instead of love's reward,
In your quest of Mistress Ford.
Then I fancy that the drenching
Tended to your ardor's quenching?

Falstaff.

Somewhat; yet if I'd a mind
I to-day might surcease find.

Ford.

(Lecher! Villain! Patience! Wait!)
What? So quickly you could mate?

Falstaff.

Yes! One never fears a scorning
When he's popular as I,
I've a summons for this morning
If my luck I wish to try.
Master Ford then for his pleasure
Hunting goes in quest of game;
Women stick at no half measure,
Once they feel love's ardent flame.

Ford.

Well, of course you'll go, Sir John?

Falstaff.

For your sake I'll try it on.

Ford.

(Many thanks, my worthy knight,
You shall this to me requite!)

Falstaff.

The appointed hour is come
Which she's filled with expectation.

Ford.

You will meet with approbation,
Promised pleasures make me dumb!

Both.

Blissful promise! O what rapture!
Haste now to the rendezvous!

Allegro moderato assia.
FALSTAFF. sempre. p
What joy is this! What joy is this! My bo-som swells with rap - ture! Our plan is sure - ly
sempre. p
Ped. Ped.
not a - miss, The fair one we will cap - ture, And her poor hus - band, stu - pid brute, We'll
Ped.

FORD.
p
Ah! What
rall.
a tempo.
most in - ge-nious - ly cor-nute! . . . . . Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,
rall.
mf a tempo.
p
p
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
sempre.
p
joy is this! What joy is this! My bo-som swells with rap - ture, The plan is sure - ly
sempre. p
Ped.
Ped.
not a - miss, To - day the wretch I'll cap - ture, My vengeance I'll then ex - e - cute, And
Ped.

a tempo.
dolce.
rall.
flog the vil - lain dis - so - lute! . . . . . Ah, ah, ah, ah ah,
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,
a tempo.
Ped. Ped. rall. p
ah, What joy is this! What joy is this! My bo - som swells with rap - ture! Our
ah, What joy is this! What joy is this! My bo - som swells with rap - ture! Our
p Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.
rall. a tempo. affretto e cresc.
plan is sure - ly not a - miss, To - day the wretch I'll cap - ture, Our
plan is sure - ly not a - miss, The fair one we will cap - ture, Our
a tempo. affretto e cresc.
p Ped. rall. Ped. Ped. sf Ped.

f Allegro.
plan is sure - ly not a - miss, To - day the wretch I'll cap - ture.
plan is sure - ly not a - miss, The fair one we will cap - ture.
f Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

Ford.

(What joy is this! What joy is this!
My bosom swells with rapture,
The plan is surely not amiss,
To-day the wretch I'll capture,
My vengeance I'll then execute,
And flog the villain dissolute!)
Farewell, Sir! (I'll flog the villain well!)

Falstaff.

Farewell, Sir! (The arrant imbecile!)

SCENE V. — *A Garden. Slender, Caius, Fenton, Anne, Page.*

Slender.

This is the hour she often spares
To walk among the flowers;
Perhaps I'll take her unawares
By waiting in the bowers —
O sweetest Anna!
No; in sooth I'll wait no longer,
To-day I will her heart invest.
Now, courage, Slender, cogitate,
Oh, beat not thus, my heart!
She'll not remain long obdurate,
Nor long such pain impart.
Some one is coming —
Perhaps 'tis she!
Now courage! Oh heavens! He!
Be quick, hush, hush!
I'll hide behind this shelt'ring bush!

Caius.

Zis ees ze hour ven *belle* Mees Page
Walk out *parmi les fleurs.*
It may be zat I sall manage
To see here *sans rumeur.*
Zen sall I till her *de ma propre bouche* —

Slender.

What's that? "The bush!" Alas! I am found out!

Caius.

Zen sall I till her: *Belle* Mees Page,
I love you vary much;
Vare's my rival, I'll heem engage,
I'll keel heem *par honneur!*
Par example ce miserable Slendare!
Vare ees he hide?
I vant to speet him, *ce* old offendare!
Et ce gaillard de Fenton,
I'll keel him too!

Fenton.

[*Behind the scenes.*]

Hark! The lark sings in the grove —

Caius.

Ciel! qu'entends-je?
Monsieur Fenton ees at hand,
So aside I'll quickly stand.

Fenton.

Hark! The lark sings in the grove,
Listen, listen, sweet!

Throw thy casement open, love,
Hear his notes entreat!
Clear the meaning that his lay
Doth to loving hearts betray!

Listen to his dulcet air
As it upward to thee steals,
Ask not what his notes declare,
What his melody reveals,
Clear the meaning that his lay,
Doth to loving hearts betray!

Slender.

Spare your idle roundelay,
Anna 'll never say me nay!

Caius.

Tiens! I almost had my prey,
Zis young man I surely slay!

Fenton, Anne, Page.

Fenton.

My dearest! Yet what mean these tears?

Anne.

Ah! cruel fate! I'm broken-hearted,
My father's pledge, my mother's wish,
Will keep us ever parted!

Fenton.

And you?

Anne.

Alas, I have no option!

Fenton.

Ah, can you discard me thus?
Alas, you love me not!
How shall I bear such sorrow!

Anne.

Can you doubt me? Can you question?
Know you not this heart of mine?
Must I ever keep repeating
That forever I am thine?
Mother's prayers can move me never,
Father's threats away are thrown,
Yours will I remain forever
Only you my heart shall own!

Fenton.

Oh, forgive my heart's despairing,
Hence all doubt and idle fear!
Oh, what bliss, what joy in hearing,
That to you I am so dear!
God nor man shall part us ever,
This my arm, shall set you free,
Mine your heart remains forever,
Mine alone henceforth you'll be!

Anne, Page, Fenton, Slender, Caius.

Fenton.

Are you still subject to intrusion
From those who'd you in marriage own?

Anne.

Alas! Ah, yes!

Fenton.

The stupid Slender, with his eternal "O sweetest Anna!"

Slender.

O confusion!
What is it that he says of me?

Fenton.

And then that idiotic Frenchman?

Anne.

He 'tis who is my mother's choice!

Caius.

Je crois entendre quelque chose—
Ma foi, I certainly must keel *ce traitre!*

Fenton.

Against two rivals such as these
The lists I'll enter quite at ease!

Anne and Fenton.

Patience, wait! All is well!
Till the hour of blissful waking,
Faithful love will never us be quite forsaking,
Sorrow now dispel!

Slender.

Ah, what grief! Hear the knell!
My sad heart is nearly breaking;
Sweetest Anna, are you thus your love forsaking?
Gone is hope's fond spell!

Caius.

Sacre Dieu! 'Tis not well!
Ce Monsieur I'll give a shaking,
Sans pardon I sall hees neck be breaking,
All hees breath expel!

Caius.

I will overtake heem and knog a shallenge about his knave's ears!

Slender.

[*Creeping out from his place of concealment and running against Caius.*]

Caius.

Ah! Vat *ce* devil! Vat you do here, Monsieur Slendare? *Ce* herring is no dead so as I vill kill you.

Slender.

[*Running away.*]

O sweetest Anna!

Caius.

[*Running after him.*]

If I catch you once more in the *gardin* of Mees Page, *mort de ma vie!* I vill cut-a off your ears — *par tous les diables!*

SCENE VI. — *A Room in Ford's House. Enter Falstaff and Mistress Ford.*

Falstaff.

Mistress Ford, your sorrow has eaten up my sufferance; I see you are obsequious in your love, and I profess requital to a hair's breadth, not only, Mistress Ford, in the simple office of love, but in all the accoutrement, complement, and ceremony of it. But are you sure of your husband now?

Mrs. Ford.

He's a-birding, sweet Sir John

Falstaff.

Then is this the period of my ambition!

[*He is about to embrace her.*]

Mrs. Page.

[*Within.*]

What, hoa, gossip Ford! What, hoa!

Mrs. Ford.

Step into the chamber, Sir John.

[*Exit Falstaff.*]

[*Enter Mistress Page.*]

Mrs. Page.

How now, sweetheart? who's at home beside yourself?

Mrs. Ford.

Why, none but mine own people.

Mrs. Page.

Indeed?

Mrs. Ford.

No, certainly.
Speak louder. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Page.

Truly, I am glad the fat knight is not here. Your husband is in his old lunes again. He swears the knight was carried out, the last time he searched for him, in a basket; protests to my husband he is now here; and hath drawn him and the rest of their company from their sport, to make another experiment of his suspicion.

Mrs. Ford.

I am undone! — the knight is here.

Mrs. Page.

Why, then you are utterly shamed, and he's but a dead man. What a woman are you! Away with him; better shame than murder.

Mrs. Ford.

Which way should he go? how should I bestow him? Shall I put him into the basket again?

Re-enter Falstaff.

Falstaff.

No, I'll come no more i' the basket; may I not go out ere he come?

Mrs. Page.

Impossible. He'd meet you at the door and murder you.

Mrs. Ford.

How might we disguise him?

Mrs. Page.

Alas the day, I know not. There is no woman's gown big enough for him; otherwise he might put on a hat, a muffler, and a kerchief, and so escape.

Falstaff.

Good hearts, devise something; any extremity rather than a mischief.

Mrs. Ford.

My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brentford, has a gown above.

Mrs. Page.

On my word, it will serve him; she's as big as he is. Run up, Sir John.

Mrs. Ford.

Go, go, sweet Sir John.

[*Exit Mrs. Page and Falstaff.*]

Mrs. Ford.

I would my husband would meet him in this shape; he cannot abide the old woman of Brentford; he swears she's a witch; forbade her my house, and hath threatened to beat her.

Enter Ford.

[*He enters cautiously, wearing a rapier; locks the door behind him and puts the key in his pocket.*]

Ford.

Ha! A clever plan I've shaped me,
In the trap he'll surely fall,
Though he yesterday escaped me,
Through this net he cannot crawl!

Mrs. Ford.

Has ill humor 'gain possessed you?
Falls again a thunder-bolt?
What new lunacies infest you?
Silly, jealous-minded dolt!

Ford.

I shall see if woman's scheming —

Mrs. Ford.

No more scenes I'll have unseeming,
No more searching in this place!

Ford.

Dare you say this to my face?
Faithless woman! Ah, how dare you!

Mrs. Ford.

Bedlam can no longer spare you,
Foolish madman!

Ford.

Silence, wife!
Cease, or I will have your life!
Wait a while, you base deceiver,
Wait awhile, 'twill not be long,
Once an innocent believer,
Now shall I avenge a wrong!
You shall see, and you shall rue,
What a righteous rage can do!
Tremble, nor my oath revile —
Wait awhile!

Mrs. Ford.

Storm awhile! 'Tis a reliever.
This fine scene, pray do prolong!
Ha, ha, ha! the mild believer,
Master Ford, no one should wrong!
(How suspicion's jealous view
Can in folly man imbrew!)
Thus do I your oath revile
With a smile!

[*Enter the servants with the basket.*]

Bravo! They come most opportunely!

Ford.

Stop, you rascals, where you are!
I'll look into yonder basket,
There's a plot and I'll unmask it!
Why, my dear, look so beseeching?
Send you clothes again to bleaching?

Mrs. Ford.

Most surely!

Ford.

Ha! A pretty state!
Wait, I'll bleach them for you straight!
[*To the servants.*]
What, stand you still gaping there? Idiots!
Ah, yes! The door I've stoutly bolted;
There! get out of here!
Now your honesty impeaching,
I'll give your knight a little bleaching,
Yes, I'll whiten your foul linen!
Come forth! come forth! come forth! You wretch!

Mrs. Ford.

Ha, ha, ha! The silly fool,
How can he thus be folly's tool?

Ford.

I know that he is hidden here!
Your dying breath prepare to fetch,
Vile pander, come, appear!

Mrs. Ford.

Bravo! Quite right! Drive home your blade;
And make of him a ghostly shade!

Ford.

And yet I know this is no freak,
Here yesterday the knight was hiding.
He's in the house! Where is he? Speak!
I beg of you, cease your deriding.
I'll find him yet, the greasy brute;
I'll turn the house quite upside down.

Mrs. Ford.

I'm mistress here, I'll not submit!

Ford.

I'll have your life!
You shall see and you shall rue,
What a righteous rage can do, etc.

Mrs. Ford.

How suspicion's jealous view
Can in folly man imbrew, etc.

Ford.

Who knocks?

Slender, Caius, Page.

Unlock, good Ford,
We come at your behest!

Ford.

Come in, come in! O friends, behold what I endure
From this most shameless, wicked woman!

Page.

Then you've already found him, neighbor?

Ford.

Not yet. She ventures to oppose my search.
Yet all in vain! The hunt we'll push with vigor!

Caius.

O ciel! quelle chose épouvantable!
He has prepare for him of fish a pretty kettle!

Ford.

On yesterday you laughed at me,
To-day you shall be witnesses
Of my most awful, bloody vengeance!

Mrs. Ford.

Well, then, in heaven's name!
I will withdraw my opposition.
Go, search the house, pry wheresoe'er you will.
Come you down, good Mistress Page,
And bring the old woman with you,
My husband would the chamber search.

Ford,

What old woman's that?

Mrs. Ford.

My maid's old aunt of Brentford.

Ford.

A cozening quean, a vile witch!
Have I not forbid her my house?

Mrs. Ford.

I beg of you, now good my dear,
Good gentlemen, I pray you,
Let him not beat the poor old woman!

Mrs. Page.

Give me, Mother Prat, your hand,
I'll support you to the door.

Ford.

Prat's her name, I understand,
Prats she shall have by the score.
Hang her, witch, what wants she here?
Is she up at fortune-telling?

Falstaff.

What say you, Sir? I'm hard of hearing.

Ford.

I'll bewitch you, fortune-tell you,
Teach you good men to deceive!

Falstaff.

What you mean, I can't perceive!

Ford.

Out, you baggage, out, begone!

The two Women.

(Pretty aches he'll feel anon!)

Ford.

Ah! That hag I've given a birching,
Now, good Sirs, begin the searching,
If I cry out upon no trail,
Then never trust me when I hail!

Ford, Page, and Slender.

Eyes wide open! ears attending,
Whoe'er finds him hold him fast!
He will pay for his offending,
If to-day he's caught at last.
Ha! { I burn / he burns } with jealous rage,
No one can { my / his } malice gauge!

The two Women.

Eyes wide open! Ears attending!
Whoe'er finds him hold him fast!
Merry is the joke impending,
O'er these men of folly vast.
Ha! he burns with jealous rage,
No one can his malice gauge!

Caius.

Oui, my ears I am attending,
Attention! I 'old heem fast.
He must pay for hees offending,
If I do heem catch at last!
Jalousie makes me to rage,
My *malice* I can not gauge!

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *A room in Page's house. Ford and Wife, Page and Wife and Anne Page seated at a table.*

Ford.

[*Kneeling at the feet of Mrs. Ford.*]

Sweetheart, will you ever forgive me?

Mrs. Ford.

Arise, my dear; all is forgiven and forgotten, so you cast aside your foolish jealousy.

Ford.

Henceforth do what thou wilt; I rather suspect the sun with cold than thee with wantonness.

Page.

By heaven! You women are fertile of invention. But once again, to make as public sport, do you appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow, where we may take him and disgrace him for it.

Ford.

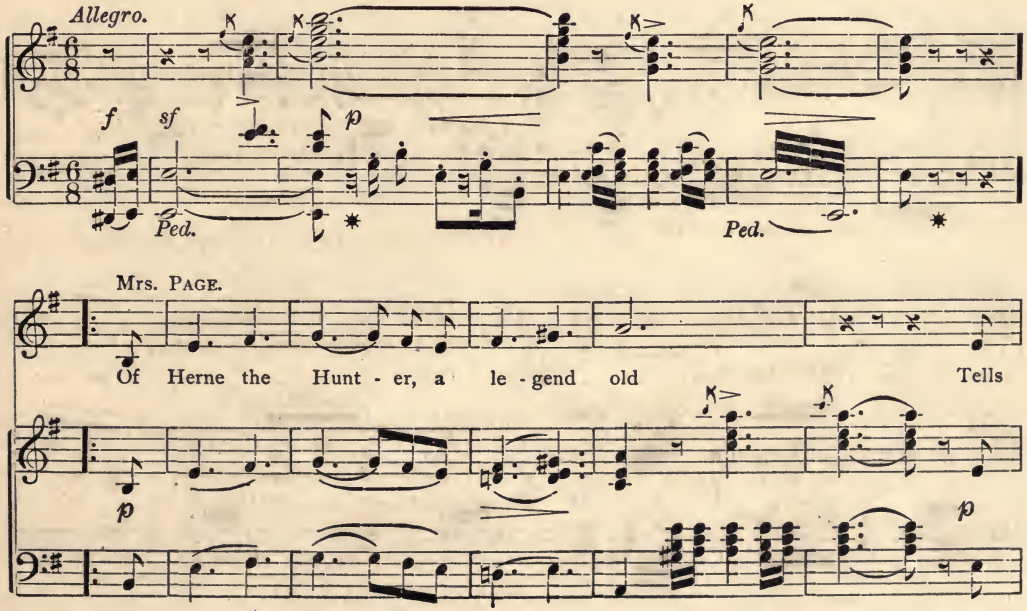
There is no better plan than that they spoke of.

Mrs. Ford.

He shall come to us as Herne the Hunter in the park at midnight.

Mrs. Page.

Listen to our plan:



how he ranged in Wind - sor's wold, Day out, . . . day
f sf p
in, ... In - to night, I ween, . . . Day in, ... day
sf sf f p
out, . . . With shout and rout . . . He hunt - ed a hart with
f sf sf
mur - der - ous bow, ... With huz - - - - - za, and with
sf f sf p

gay . . . hal - loo, . . . That fled with haste to the oak tree, a shield 'gainst
sf f sf p
death there be - spoke he, A shield 'gainst death there be - spoke he.

The hunter, eager, fierce and wild,
Recked not a whit the omen mild.
O, Hunter! that shaft from thy quiver
Hath made thee hunt there forever!

Of Herne, the Hunter, a legend old
Tells how he ranged in Windsor's wold,
Night out, night in,
Till the sun was seen;
Night in, night out,
With shout and rout!
He wears on his head the deer's antlers high,
And fearful rings his tally-ho cry:
"O fly the holy oak-tree,
Lest death resistless invoke thee!"
When strikes the bell the sunless noon,
And highest rides the radiant moon,
Doth Herne forever there tarry,
And seizes all for quarry!

Page and Ford.

Bravo! bravo!

Mrs. Ford.

Nan Page, my daughter, and my little son,
And three or four of their growth, will dress
Like urchins, ouphies, and fairies green and white,
With rounds of waxen tapers on their heads,
And rattles in their hands. Upon a sudden,
As Falstaff, she and I are newly met,
Let them from forth a sawpit rush at once,
With some diffuséd song; upon their sight,
We two in great amazédness will fly.
Then let them all encircle him about,
And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight,
And ask him why that hour of fairy revel,
In their so secret paths he dares to tread,
In shape profane.

Mrs. Page.

My Nan shall distribute the parts.

Ford.

And I'll again to the knight; he confides all to his friend Brook.

Mrs. Ford.

Come then us for the sport prepare.

SCENE II.—*Mistress Page. Anne Page.*

Mrs. Page.

And now, sweet child, a word of weight with you. Thou know'st the doctor's love and that he would take thee to wife.

Anne.

I know.

Mrs. Page.

The mummery which we have planned shall see the consummation of my wish. You shall dress in red, and by that token Dr. Caius will know you, fly with you in the height of the burly, and wed you in Eton Chapel.

Anne.

Ah heaven! If it but succeed!

Mrs. Page.

Fear not; all will go well. I give you good-day, Mistress Doctor!

[*Exit Mrs. Ford.*]

Anne.

My dear mother, ne'er can your Nan become the consort of yon Frenchman; her heart belongs to Fenton. Quick to warn my love of the plot, that he may reap its benefits.

[*Prepares to write.*]

Page.

[*Entering.*]

What matter do you write, my child?

Anne.

I — I was but distributing the parts in our masquerade.

Page.

Ha! then my device will come in play. My Nan to-night must appear as a fairy in green, that Slender may recognize her. He'll escape with you in the midst of the rout and you will be wedded in the chapel at Eton.

Anne.

So soon, dear father?

Page.

[*Sternly.*]

You'll not longer put fortune aside. Do not vex me.

Anne.

No, father mine, I'll be obedient.

Page.

Bravely spoken, and like a dutiful daughter. And so farewell until to-night, Mistress Slender.

[*Exit.*]

Anne.

[*Laughing.*]

Ha, ha! My plan is perfected. To Caius I'll send a green gown, to Slender a red. Each will think 'tis I within the garment. As for Fenton — take whatever shape thou wilt, my love, thy Anne will recognize thee!

Anne Page.

'Tis well! completed is our plan;
It but remains to move to execution. Thou,
Of love the patron sprite, O lovely fay,
Titania, to me protection give,
And lend to me your robe of purest white,
That airy-light towards the goal will waft me!
Within no verdant dress will I enwrap me,
Nor e'en a rosy vesture choose.
No! white shall be my robe,
All white my veil, and white the wreath,
With fragrant lilies twining in my ringlets.

Thus clad I'll thee, beloved, meet,
Thoult know me thus, and fondly greet,
And pledge thyself forever mine,
I myself thine, all thine!

Deep in the forest's leafy shade,
Invites a cool, sequester'd glade,
The moon's bright face in radiance shining,
Will light our path 'mid boughs entwining.

And art thou then, beloved, mine,
And I unalterably thine,
Then every forgiveness will not wait,
To seal our happy fate!

O dream of enchantment,
O blissful joy!
Your smile is so golden,
Without alloy!
The clouds are dissolved
In oceans of blue,
And moonbeams bespangle
The meadows anew!
Fulfilment advances
With roseate hue,
Our pure love to render
The honor that's due!

SCENE III. — *Windsor Park. Ford, Page, Slender.*

Page.

Remember, son Slender, my daughter's dress is green.

Slender.

Ay, forsooth; I have spoken with her, and we have a nay-word how to know one another. I come to her and cry "mum," she cries "budget," and by that we know one another.

Page.

That's good too. Mistress Page will be amazed when I present my daughter Mistress Slender!

Ford.

Let us away. Our friends must be already gathered.

Page.

Yes, we'll away — Farewell, my son-in-law.

Slender.

O sweetest Anna!

[*Exit all.*]

SCENE IV. — *Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, Caius.*

Mrs. Page.

Master Doctor, my daughter is in red; by that you'll know her.

Caius.

Ah, *mille remerciments!* By gar, I am vary happy — I know vat I have to do — *Au revoir, Mesdames.*

[*Exit.*]

Mrs. Page.

How Page will stare!

Mrs. Ford.

Let us in. Falstaff may come at any moment.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE V. — *Voices in the forest.*

O silvery moon!
O lovely night!
When quiet reigns
Love's watch is bright!

Falstaff.

The Windsor bell hath midnight rung,
The hour all sorrow scorns;
Remember, Jove, thou wert a bull,
'Twas love sat on thy horns.
If love could thus a god translate
I'll be forgiv'n my antlered pate.
But, hist! a moving to and fro,—
Ah, who comes here? My graceful doe?

Mrs. Ford.

Pst! Pst! Sir John!

Mrs. Page.

Pst! Pst! Sir John!

Falstaff.

Baa!

Mrs. Ford. [*Spoken.*]

He does not trust us yet. I must go nearer.

Mrs. Ford.

My gallant deer, 'tis only I!

Falstaff.

My doe, approach me, be not shy!

Mrs. Page.

Pst! Pst!

Falstaff.

Hush! hush! there's some one coming near!

Mrs. Ford.

'Tis only Mistress Page, my dear!

Mrs. Page.

Who could resist your pleading, knight,
Or fail your sweet love to requite?

Falstaff.

Let the sky now lighten and thunder,
Rain or snow hot sulphur and pitch!
Naught shall tear us three asunder,
Make us feel affliction's stitch!

Both Women.

But tell us first, you naughty knight,
Whether we dare trust you quite!

Falstaff.

Divide me like a bribe-buck!
To dally Falstaff scorns;
We'll send to both your husbands
This ample pair of horns!
Come, come!

Both Women.

Ah!

Andante lento.
MRS. FORD.
sempre. p
MRS. PAGE.
sempre. p
FALSTAFF.
You sweetheart, precious treas - ure, If we should be disturbed, A nook I know where
p
MRS. FORD.
You sweetheart, precious treas - ure, If
MRS. PAGE.
p
You sweetheart, precious treas - ure, If
p
pleas - ure has nev - er yet been curbed. You sweetheart, pre-cious treas - ure, If
Ped. * Ped.
rall.
we should be dis-turbed, A nook I know where pleas - ure has nev - er yet been
we should be dis-turbed, A nook I know where pleas - ure has nev - er yet been
we should be dis-turbed, A nook I know where pleas - ure has nev - er yet been
Ped. * Ped.
rall.

a tempo.
p
curbed. Oh, Oh come! Ah, Sir
p
curbed. Oh, Oh come! Ah, Sir
p
curbed. Come, Oh come! Come, Oh
p
Ped. a tempo.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
cres.
p
John! Ah, Sir John! Who could re - sist your
cres.
p
John! Ah, Sir John! Who could re - sist your
cres.
p
come, come, Oh come, The hid - den nook we'll
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
pp

poco rall.
p a tempo.
plead - ing, Who could re - sist your plead - ing, You sweetheart, precious treas - ure, If
p
plead - ing, Who could re - sist your plead - ing, You sweetheart, precious treas - ure, If
p
seek, The hid - den nook we'll seek, You sweetheart, precious treas - ure, If
poco rall.
a tempo.
pp
Ped.
Ped. pp
p Ped.
tr rall.
we should be disturbed, A nook I know where pleas - ure Has nev - er yet been curbed.
we should be disturbed, A nook I know where pleas - ure Has nev - er yet been curbed.
we should be disturbed, A nook I know where pleas - ure Has nev - er yet been curbed.
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. col canto. pp Ped.

Both Women.

Oh, heaven! What strange noise is this?
Fly, fly!

Falstaff.

Heaven help me, they are fays,
'Tis death to see their plays!

SCENE VI.—*Anne Page* (*as Titania*), *Fenton* (*as Oberon*), *Page* (*as Herne*), *Fairies.*

Fairies.

Ye fairies white, and red, and green,
In merry revel be now seen.
Search Windsor castle in and out
And let it ring with joyous shout!

Anne Page.

All mankind sleeps. No eye at us is peeping,
And midst the flowers our happy tryst we're keeping;
From nightingale our sweetest words we'll con,
Oh, haste to me, my dearest Oberon!

Fenton.

Gone is the gloom that us so long affrighted,
And love at last, has firmly us united.
We are reconciled. How sweet the moment, Ah!
Again is mine the fair Titania!

Both.

We're reconciled, etc.

Fairies.

They're reconciled, etc.

Fairies.

Now once again let all advance,
And join the gladsome fairy dance!
Through bush and brier, through flower and thorn,
Come Hunter Herne, come blow your horn!
What's this? Come blow your horn!

Page.

Observe, the music's dearth,
Here is a man of middle earth!

Fairies.

A man? A man? Oh, villainy!
Up, seek him! Drag him o'er the ground,
We have him here! He's quickly found!
See, Herne, behold his treachery!

Page.

What drove thee, daring child of man,
To follow thus the mummer's plan?
The fairies' council thou hast heard,
And death should be thy quick reward!
Pinch him, fairies, mutually,
Pinch him for his villainy!
Pinch him till he hath confessed
All his treason manifest!

Caius, Slender, Page, and Chorus.

Chorus.

Pinch him fairies mutually,
Pinch him for his villainy!
Pinch him, burn him, turn about!
Till the moon and stars are out!

Caius.

Ah, ze fairie there in red,
Is Mees Anna as she said!

Slender.

Yonder beck'ning fay in green,
Is sweet Anna, all serene!

Page.

Still he's not the crime confessed,
That's contained within his breast.
Up, ye fairies, one and all,
On him now in myriads fall!

Chorus.

Pinch him, fairies mutually,
Pinch him for his villainy!
Pinch him, burn him, turn about,
Till the moon and stars are out!
Who sets pitfalls for the unwary
Oft himself falls in the snare,
Of your wits you must be more chary,
If you'd deceive wives good and fair!
Unbeliever!
Arch deceiver!
Vengeance has you now o'ertaken!
Vile inventions,
Base intentions,
Henceforth be they all forsaken!
Assignations!
Profligations!
Thy gross fat we've soundly shaken!
Your persistence
In existence
Stops, else you repent!

[*Falstaff tries to escape unseen.*]

All.

[*Spoken.*]

Stop, deceiver!

Falstaff.

[*On his knees.*]

Mercy

Page.

Nay, do not fly. I think we have watched you now;
Will none but Herne the Hunter serve your turn?

Ford.

Sir John, here is Master Brook, and here is the wife of Master Brook, and Master Brook is Master Ford, Sir John, and who's a cuckoldy knave now, Sir John?

Mrs. Ford.

Sir John, we have had ill-luck; we could never meet. I will never take you for my love again, but I will always count you my deer!

Falstaff.

I do perceive that I am made an ass.

Mrs. Page.

Such a hodge-pudding!

Mrs. Ford.

A bag of flax!

Page.

Old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails!

Ford.

And one that is as slanderous as Satan!

Falstaff.

Well, I am your theme; you have the start of me; I am dejected; use me as you will.

Enter Slender and Caius, hand in hand.

Slender.

Whoo, ho! ho! father Page!

Caius.

Vare is Madame Page? By gar, I am cozened. I ha' married *un garçon*, a boy; *un paisan*, by gar, a boy; it is not Anne Page. I am cozened; I'll raise all Windsor!

Page.

My heart misgives me! here comes Master Fenton.

Enter Fenton and Anne Page.

Anne.

Pardon, good father, good my mother, pardon!

Fenton.

She and I, long since contracted, are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.

Page and Mrs. Page.

Here is no remedy, and therefore take our blessing!

Page.

Be comforted, good Master Slender!

Slender.

O sweetest Anna!

Mrs. Ford.

And you, Sir John, come with us. All is forgiven. We will establish peace, and at Anne's wedding sports you shall drown your sorrows in brooks of sack.

Falstaff.

I am glad, though you have ta'en a special stand to strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

Page.

What cannot be eschew'd must be embraced.

Falstaff.

When night-dogs run all sorts of deer are chased.

Anne Page, Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page.

'Tis thus that our sport in the beautiful night,
The hearts and the hands of loving ones plighted.
Now haste to the wedding! All happy and light,
By none be the gladness and merriment slighted!
Sir John — we are with mercy fraught,
We will pardon! And to all gratulations.

[*To the Public.*]

Your pardon we crave. We've only taught
That wives may be merry, yet honest!

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